

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY USSR (Latvian SSR)

REPORT

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Latvian Guards Division

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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.  
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1. Sixty recruits from Lepaya (N 56-28, E 21-00) were assigned to a tank unit of the 201st Latvian Guards Division in May 1951. A total of about 90 men were billeted in one room. Of these 90 men, 60 were the recruits from Lepaya, 10 were from Riga, and five were from Jelgava (N 56-38, E 23-40). These 90 men formed a rota (company). Normally a company was composed of 150 men. Numbers were assigned to all companies. The soldiers wore black shoulder boards with a tank design.
2. The commanding officer of the company was a Russian major. The other officers included a Russian lieutenant, a Latvian political lieutenant, and a Latvian junior lieutenant, who had formerly been an infantry officer but had been assigned to a tank unit. In addition there were a Latvian sergeant major, two Latvian sergeants, and one Russian sergeant. The Russian sergeant was more popular with the new recruits because the Latvians were former Komsomol members and because the Latvians liked to show off in front of the Russians.
3. Each morning the major divided the company into sections of 15 men each for training purposes. Sometimes a junior lieutenant and a sergeant each took a group of men. The sections were not permanently composed of the same men.
4. All lectures and instructions were given in the Russian language and those who did not understand had to make the best of the situation. However, in the beginning an exception was made in favor of one group which received technical instructions in Latvian. The majority of the recruits knew Russian, since Russian is spoken in all offices and shops.
5. All the recruits were kept apart from the other soldiers and they were not permitted to visit anyone in other companies.

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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6. The history of the 201st Latvian Guards Division was the subject of one of the political lectures. The division was formed by Latvians who went to the USSR in 1941. The lecturer said that it was well known that the division was heroic and communistic. The division participated in battles near Moscow, Krasnoye Selo, and Volkhova. It was thought that the division acquired the "Guards" designation during the fighting near Moscow. At the end of the war the division was in Riga, where it has remained ever since, with summer quarters located at Carnikava. In 1950, however, it was rumored in Latvia that some technical units of the division had gone to Sovetsk (N 55-06, E 21-50) and Siauliai (N 55-55, E 23-18) for a short stay and then returned to Riga.

7. At the Krusta Barracks no guns were observed, and only two small tanks were seen at the barracks gates. These tanks were in poor condition and very dirty after returning from exercises.

8. No gas masks were issued to the recruits. In the lecture hall some gas masks, which had been cut in half for instruction purposes, were on display.

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After turning in their uniforms these men were placed near a fence inside the barracks area and were not allowed near the other soldiers. After waiting for three hours they were given a collective document for the group and accompanied by a sergeant to the railroad station, where they received a collective ticket and were sent back to Lepaya. The sergeant had left them at the railroad station and they travelled unescorted. Apart from ten rubles given the men on their first day of military service, they were given no money or food. During the three-hour wait prior to their departure from the barracks, some of the men bought schnapps at the canteen, where while in uniform they had been allowed to purchase beer only.

11. Upon arriving in Lepaya the men went straight to the War Commissariat<sup>1</sup> where two of the men received their civilian documents immediately, while the other five<sup>2</sup> were sent to a civilian hospital for observation, where they remained for a week.

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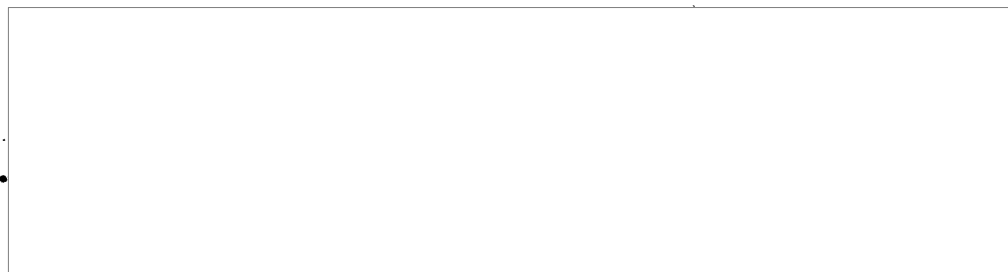



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1.  Comment. It is presumed that the term War Commissariat refers to the local Voenkomat (draft board).

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